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Dorothy Huyck's National Park Service Oral History Project, 1942-1987

John A. Townsley
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[START OF TAPE 1, SIDE A]

Dorothy Huyck: When we met the other night at Lake, you immediately began producing a fund of stories about women who have been in the National Park Service as professional employees. For instance, you remembered Enid Michael?

John Townsley: I remember her in the sense of being a youngster in Yosemite. I guess as youngsters will you have high curiosities, so that people that are interesting or people that are doing things that are perhaps a bit different, you know, you follow and watch, and are interested in, and Mrs. Michael was certainly one of those. I suspect that at that age that I was also intrigued by CCC boys, and dump trucks and lots of things, and as I mentioned to you the other night, one of the special things in Yosemite during that era was the museum and the interpretative program. There was a Junior Naturalist Program for visitors and local youngsters were welcome to it. I don't recall specifically, but I'm sure that Mrs. Michael participated in that. There were many activities around the museum, and there were really the two women that I recall. One of them would have been Maggie Howard, and Maggie, of course, was a Yosemite Indian. We think so frequently of living history, one really needs to go back to the Indian old days of Yosemite if you want to start thinking about living history. One of the offshoots of that was that they had Indian dances in the back of the museum. Let's see. Maybe I got Maggie's last name wrong Maggie – I'm not sure.[1] It may have been Howard, maybe not, but in any event, Maggie made baskets and she made acorn bread and sold them to park visitors, and so I have recollections of her. Then a man by the name of Lee-mee – Chief Lee-mee – I'd have to think a moment to get his regular name, Chris Brown he danced a great deal. The reason I bring those in with Enid Michael was that all during that era there was this very large open area in back of the museum that she and others were working to build into a wildflower garden. It was really exceptional. And in that particular time, they thought a lot about life zones and what impact elevation had on plants and animals, back to Tracey Storer and George Burke Burnell and others, so that was much in the minds of the people and this flower garden really reflected the life zones of Yosemite from down in the Sonoran country around Mariposa up to the sub-Alpen zones of Mount Conness. One of my visual recollections is of Mrs. Michael working with CCC boys out in that garden planting and developing the irrigation. Plants needed moist climates and all. Then I recall her in the sense of her husband who, as I recall, worked at the Post Office, and they were always people, among others in the Valley, that you just recall doing special

[1] Maggie Howard's name is correct. Her Indian name was Ta-Bu-Ce.

things, and things that I think in an era that were really very important. I think today we very frequently reinvent the wheel and think we're starting things. I recall stories of early naturalists that picked wildflowers and put them in jars of water and put their names on them. Well, perhaps today that's kind of crude, but on the other hand, people are still interested in those basic elements of botany and zoology, you know, we're all interested in – what do you call it – why is it, and I think it's only been in recent times that we've been more interested in the wheres and whyfors and the relationships between things, but that was an era of learning where they were and what they were and naming them and things like that. Mrs. Michael was an exceptional person, and she was a person that was very highly regarded in the community of Yosemite by visitors, park people and concessions people. She was just one of the outstanding people there.

Dorothy Huyck: She maintained some of these jars of flowers, as I remember.

John Townsley: Yes. I think you would go back and find that she was one of the ones that began to early things in the way of floral displays and helping people get that. You have to go back to Yosemite, and you have to go back to Dr. Bryant. You have to start him with – I think the man's name was Goethe, and he was also interested – You know, I was interested the other day that he was one of the early people to fund the Christian Ministry in the National Parks, so you might get some interesting stories about him from Warren Ost, and that could lead you too, in the sense of professional women, you know, to the professional of theology. There've been many people involved in the Christian Ministry since Warren began it here as a bellman (unintelligible) at Old Faithful in the early '40's, and that would be another group of women that participated very much in the culture in our parks. But in any event, Mr. Goethe, who was very interested in nature walks and nature guiding that he had come across in Switzerland, and if I recall correctly, provided enough money for Dr. Bryant to go to Lake Tahoe, and I think it was 1919. I'm not sure of the year. He did some nature guiding there, and that fall he and Mrs. Bryant put their two kids on their back walked, if I recall correctly, from Lake Tahoe down the crest of the Sierras to Yosemite. The next summer they moved the nature guiding issue from Lake Tahoe to Yosemite. (There's a really interesting report by Mather, about 1915, on why it was not feasible for Lake Tahoe to be included in the National Park System. It was private ownership and all the politics of it, but Tahoe at that time on the West Coast was an interesting place in relationship to natural things.) So in any event, with Dr. Bryant's interest there, and a little bit later Carl Russell's and Ansel Hall in that same period of time – in fact my dad did the taxidermy on all the animals that were in the first museum, which was the house we later lived in – but Enid was in that group, you know, that, in my judgment, were some of the

real beginnings; the real embryos of the interpretation of the Natural Park System really began to well up in Yosemite Valley. You had this tremendous input from the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology at the University of California, you just had an awful lot of things that were happening there at that time. So, in any event, Mrs. Bryant, Amy Bryant, would be another person that really played a key role in the evolution of things interpretative. And Betty Russell, who you would find—

Dorothy Huyck: I've interviews her—

John Townsley: —if you've interviewed her, there was simply a sharing of those women in their husband's work where it was – I don't like the word partnership – but they were not involved as helpers, they were really generators of many things that happened. I think so frequently we talk about rules and regulations and how you do things, but what we're really talking about is people and relationships. The growth of same of the ideas and the evolution of a philosophy and the putting together of things that have brought us to where we are, in my judgment is a shared kind of thing.

Dorothy Huyck: Excuse me. Could I ask you about the Yosemite Field School in that a number of women did attend the Yosemite Field School and yet rather consistently they – those that are still alive that I have talked to – said that they were told both at the beginning of the summer and at the end that there was no place for them in the National Park Service. They nonetheless took the course.

John Townsley: I can't speak to that. The termination of the school was in the early part of World War II, I think, and it was a matter of funding for it. One of the people you might visit with about that would be (pause) Bob McIntyre, who is retired and he's living in Seattle. He was in Yosemite at the time, I think, when the Field School was going to fold. That was an outgrowth, too, of that early interest of the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology. I've never heard the statement that you made. I would want to test it in the sense that I think some women who were teachers came through that school, and I think some of them may have become naturalists.

Dorothy Huyck: One of the persons who has very specifically said this both in print and verbally is a woman who has worked in Yellowstone. Her name is Mildred Ericson.

John Townsley: O.K.

Dorothy Huyck: She attended the school—

John Townsley: Yes.

Dorothy Huyck: —I believe in '39.

John Townsley: I wasn't denying it at all.

Dorothy Huyck: No—

John Townsley: But I'm just saying that this is the first time that I ever heard that.

Dorothy Huyck: But she's not the only person who had the same experience, where they were very much enrolled and took complete part in these summer educational programs of the Field School, but were told by the Park Service personnel but initially and at the end of the summer that the men would become rangers but there would be no possible consideration of women.

John Townsley: I don't know what your research is going to produce in that sense, but I would guess that all you have to do is look at the eras when you had women and that timing would support what you're saying. I think when you look back to people… Well, we were talking about Claire Marie Hodges Wolfsen (Morris) the other night, and we were chatting about (pause) – the lady here who was a naturalist, her husband was later a regional director—

Dorothy Huyck: Herma Albertson Baggley.

John Townsley: Yes. Mrs. Baggley. That goes back to a very early time. Then the Field School really comes after that.

Dorothy Huyck: Well, women did attend the Field School as early as ‘29.

John Townsley: Yes, but I'm saying that's ten years later. I don't know when Mrs. Baggley was here, but was it earlier—

Dorothy Huyck: She left here in ‘33.

John Townsley: O.K., I didn't realize it was that late. In any event, as I think about women, it was before – don't remember many of them in uniform, and I was born in 1927, so in effect I think of that early period of women as being in the early ‘20’s, and perhaps not so much in the ‘30’s. I think by the ‘30’s, I think you really had developed a corporation in the sense of bureaucracy. You had gotten a fairly intensive Civil Service element in hiring and firing people, and I would suspect it was moving very much in that direction where it was an all-male club, so to speak, and there was probably very little enthusiasm for women. I think for one thing, I think there was always some question of whether, in male eyes, whether the visitor would see a woman as being as effective as a man. I don't suggest that that's valid, I just say I suspect that it was one of the elements of it, and there's always been an ongoing discussion about could naturalists do rangers' and could rangers do naturalists' work and on and on and on; so it may well be that some of those pieces were in there. Going back for a moment, and not

begging your question, Burt Harwell, a great bird whistler, was a part of that Yosemite piece, and Max Skillscraft, who later went to The Christian Science Monitor, an Oklahoman, another great whistler and who died after he wrote a number of very fine articles beginning Mission 66, Ed Beatty, Mr. Cole and some others, and those are names that you – Ed Beatty's living, Mr. Cole is living. You might go back and test some of that business on attitudes of the Yosemite Field School about women with them. I remember most of those men as being very gentle men, not what you'd call heavy-handed, harsh people that you might suspect would have been more anti-female than that. I don't recall many. I guess my recollections do not include seasonal naturalists in Yosemite in the '30's.

Dorothy Huyck: I believe this statement is frequently attributed to Mr. Harwell.

John Townsley: I could – I think I could understand that, but without reason, but I think there were very definite opinions and very definite attitudes and that's where we were, and again, where you had a woman in a national park and in interpretative work, if you begin testing, (and Frank Brockman in Seattle is another one to go on that)

Dorothy Huyck: Yes.

John Townsley: You may have found a very, very strong personality and a probably very good educational background and probably avoid somebody else filling that void, namely a man. I don't know if there is any validity to that, but it might be kind of an interesting way to come at that. Where you found a woman, how strong a man did you have in that particular area at the time?

Dorothy Huyck: Very interesting. Do you remember Mrs. Michaels and her bird walks?

John Townsley: Yes.

Dorothy Huyck: As a child did you take part in any of them?

John Townsley: No. My dad was a ranger, and I went to the Junior Nature School sometimes, but I'd have to say that there were bug catchers, and people that watch birds, and culturally you were either with them or you weren't, and I kind of came out of the background where you weren't, even though my dad was very interested in those things. I guess what I was really more interested in was the model of the ranger than the model of the naturalist. My interest in birding really didn't start until I went to college and took ornithology. It's a horrible thing because those are extraordinary things for people and when you're young you're exposed to them. They're so much more – I think they're more special and that's a special time in your life.

Dorothy Huyck: You didn't happen to participate in any of her mountain climbing efforts?

John Townsley: No.

Dorothy Huyck: Which I gather were extensive.

John Townsley: They were extensive. They climbed, and I think you'll find that she – that her husband was also – I think that that was the thing I would have associated in a recollection of the two of them is that they were simply always walking. I think you need to remember that most of the Yosemite Mountains really are scrambling mountains, and if we look at technical climbing today, while they did some of it, and some of the stories are rather extraordinary, if you were able to track most of the places they were, you'd find that they were fairly simple, scrambling kinds of things as we relate rock climbing today slick rock climbing, the equipment and all. But they hiked a great deal. There was another lady, and I don't know how much she – whether she or Enid may have been together, but I was looking through our guest book the other night and Cozy Mills Hutchings name came up again. Cozy was a tremendous walker. In fact, we were always – I can remember my dad was always being concerned. Where was Cozy and what was she doing. She'd be out. I can remember him saying, "One of these days we'll go and look for Cozy, because she won't come back," but she'd curl up under a bush if it got late and stay out and come home the next day, but with no concern at all. You might, at some point, if you're interested, you might want to correspond with my mother about Cozy because she was very close to her, and they did many things together. I think you'd find some rather interesting incidents from her. She's on the West Coast at the moment, but she lives in Arlington, Virginia. I'll give you her phone number it's JA8-2714. I don't know when she'll be home, but – later in the fall, but you could call me and find out. She could – My mother could give you some other kind of interesting stories if she was moved, and I think she would be. I don't know. I wouldn't ask her to. That would (depend on) what her feelings were about it. The first chief rangers' conference, which was held in Sequoia National Park, and I don't recall the year, my dad decided to take my mother. I recall my mother saying that Colonel White – and this is a reference back to your speaking about Burt Harwell saying there's no place for women – Colonel White, who was superintendent at Sequoia, made it very clear and very precisely clear, that he had not anticipated any women coming to that meeting. As I recall my mother's comment on it, "Well, since you're here, I guess you might as well go to dinner with us," or something like that, but it was very crisp. You know, that was a very intense era, when male things were male things and that's kind of where it was. I think you'll find many, many of the early families in western parks were rural people, and in the sense of ruralness, I think that the relationship of what women did and what men did was perhaps more in the separation of things that you would have found it in urban places in that same period of time.

Dorothy Huyck: That's very interesting.

John Townsley: Yosemite, out of the foothills, (unintelligible) Mariposa, the mining communities on up along the (unintelligible) place, there's a delightful lady by the name of Midge Raymond, and her present name is Wise. She remarried, but her husband was John Raymond.

Dorothy Huyck: Her present name is what?

John Townsley: Her married name when she was in Yosemite was Midge Raymond.

Dorothy Huyck: And now?

John Townsley: It's Midge Wise – W-i-s-e, and she lives in Coulterville, California. My mother was up to see her a few weeks ago. Midge would have recollections of the kinds of people who really were in the parks at that time, and many, many of them came from those foothill areas, and there was a good deal of cousins, and people came to the park and were married and out of it you had a lot of "in- breeding," so they were a very tight community. I think that's rather typical of a number of the western parks. I think you'd have found some of it here.

Dorothy Huyck: We were speaking of the – Mrs. Morris, Claire Marie (Wolfsen) Morris. Mrs. Ernest Morris?

John Townsley: Down at the hotel the other night?

Dorothy Huyck: Yes. You asked me if I had contacted Mrs. Ernest Morris, and I mentioned to you that she had died.

John Townsley: Gosh, I don't that slips me at the moment.

Dorothy Huyck: All right. She was the woman ranger who came on duty in 1918.

John Townsley: Where?

Dorothy Huyck: At Yosemite.

John Townsley: O.K. I'm not familiar with that. Maybe you mentioned it to me.

Dorothy Huyck: I thought you referred to Mrs. Ernest Morris and asked if I had gotten in touch with her.

John Townsley: No.

Dorothy Huyck: Isn't this the same woman who named her son for your father?

John Townsley: You mentioned that she had named—

Dorothy Huyck: Yes. That's—

John Townsley: Again, you might go to my mother and do better.

Dorothy Huyck: All right.

John Townsley: My mom might be useful to you in a variety of pieces of this because she married my dad in 1926, but she worked in Yosemite from 1921 to 1923, so things that were going on in 1918, 1919 to 1926 she might be able to give you leads on some of the places.

Dorothy Huyck: Very good. Again, some of the qualities of women which you're speaking about – For instance, when my father died at a high mountain lake in 1943 in Yosemite, Eliza Danner, who was the wife of the district ranger there, came – Carl went up to where my dad had died with some other people to get him—

Dorothy Huyck: Carl Russell?

John Townsley: Carl Danner. And Eliza took three horses and came into the north end of the park where another boy and I were out hiking, without really knowing where we were, and she came, and she got us, and we turned around and went home. I think that was sixty-two miles. There are not many men or women that today think about riding sixty-two miles, and I would have guessed at that time she must have been a woman of fifty. When they brought flying fishermen to Yosemite, why, very frequently Eliza took them, and she had an extraordinary roll cast. She could fish brushy places like very few men. So, while they might not have been working, in a sense, there were a whole lot of things that women were doing in the era that are really an intriguing part of the history of how things worked.

Dorothy Huyck: You've also been stationed at Mt. Rainier.

John Townsley: Yes.

Dorothy Huyck: Do you remember anything of women who held professional positions at Mt. Rainier. There were two during World War II, and reputedly there was one very early on in the history of Mt. Rainier.

John Townsley: I think I mentioned the other night that Bill Butler might be the person who could help you with that, and I'm sure that (Frank) Brockman would be able to go back to the earlier one because (Frank) did a lot of – He's really good on stories—

Dorothy Huyck: I've already spoken with him, but I have not spoken to Bill Butler.

John Townsley: Were you not able to trace out that earlier one? Wasn't she involved in interpretative work and natural history work?

Dorothy Huyck: Yes, I think so, but I'm very uncertain about any information.

John Townsley: Now, (Frank) – Let's see – I'm embarrassed that the names don't come well for me always. The first naturalist at Rainier was, several years ago,

still living around Seattle. Without referencing it to me, if you were to go to (Frank) and get his name or get it from Rainier, he might be able to take you back to that one, but it seems to me when I was at Rainier I call a woman who'd been in early interpretative work or natural history work in Rainier. That, I suspect, is – see, Carl's (Frank) time probably started in the early 30's—

Dorothy Huyck: I think it was prior to that.

John Townsley: Well, maybe it could have been 1928 or 1929, but it's Depression time. I think he got on in early Depression, so he may have worked seasonally around there. I'll try to think of that other name. Give me a minute and maybe it'll come.

Dorothy Huyck: Have you been located here in Yellowstone previously?

John Townsley: No, I'd not worked in Yellowstone. I worked for a long time seasonally in Yosemite, and seasonally in Glacier, and I've worked in Hawaii, Crater Lake, Oregon Caves, Glacier.

Dorothy Huyck: Crater Lake brings up a question. I have heard that there was, once upon a time, a woman in a professional role there but I've not been able to even get a name on this, and I've talked to people at Crater Lake at some length.

John Townsley: There's a ranger there by the name of Godfrey who – there was a question of some people didn't come to get him and he perished in a snowstorm. His wife's name was Elizabeth Godfrey, and she came to Yosemite and worked as a secretary for many, many years, and she has since passed away. But my mother could tell you about her in the sense that, you know, I don't know how you're defining professional, but I would sense – we called her Babs – I would sense that Mrs. Godfrey probably contributed well beyond what you'd call clerical or stenographic work, in the '30's and '40's in Yosemite in the naturalist division. Her husband was not around – her second husband – and I don't know anybody that could tie to that. (pause) I think what I would do would be to go back – try to go to some of the early superintendents' reports.

Dorothy Huyck: I've read many of them.

John Townsley: Have you?

Dorothy Huyck: Yes. Thousands of pages of the monthly reports.

John Townsley: Monthly reports. In that area they were pretty precise. They were quite voluminous.

Dorothy Huyck: Indeed. (laughter)

John Townsley: With lots of trivia repeated, but nonetheless, since we've quit doing it, there's a lot of stuff that isn't being recorded anymore.

Dorothy Huyck: True.

John Townsley: I don't know if that would help you, but my mother might mention some early names of people at Crater Lake that could give you a clue to that.

Dorothy Huyck: Have you known the Baggleys?

John Townsley: I've only known them – of course, there's a great deal of difference in age, and I can recall Mr. Baggley as a man that I considered one of the senior great people in the Service. I've visited with him several times since he's been here, but I don't know anything really about them as a family or about her time here. Aubrey Haines—

Dorothy Huyck: Yes, I talked with him recently – yesterday.

John Townsley: —would be good on that. There's a lady in Livingston, Montana by the name of Ardeth Brown. Ardeth married a ranger who spent time in Yosemite, and her husband was superintendent of Crater Lake – maybe in the early '60's. I don't know. Ardath might be—

Dorothy Huyck: What is his name?

John Townsley: Brown?

Dorothy Huyck: Yes.

John Townsley: Otto.

Dorothy Huyck: Otto. Thank you. It may well be listed under Otto Brown.

John Townsley: But she might possibly be able to trace something back for you or at least give you some other leads on that lady at Crater Lake.

Dorothy Huyck: Yes.

John Townsley: You never know. It's just a matter of going in a lot of directions.

Dorothy Huyck: That's right. (laughter) Indeed.

John Townsley: Hunting for things that way.

Dorothy Huyck: Very needles in the haystack.

John Townsley: Very much.

Dorothy Huyck: Are you familiar with the name of Marguerite Lindsley Arnold who worked here?

John Townsley: Just by name. I'm not a person who has information on her. One of the women – Now another woman that – if you're not staying totally with NPS employees—

Dorothy Huyck: I am, to be honest with you. I have to because there are just too many NPS employees of interest, and I'm not going to be able to interview all of them.

John Townsley: Some of the extraordinary contributions did not come from NPS women. They come from the concessioner women—

Dorothy Huyck: Yes, that's right.

John Townsley: —and I would guess that Mary Curry Tresidder and more impact on Yosemite—

Dorothy Huyck: I'm quite sure Herb Evison interviewed her.

John Townsley: —than ninety-five out of a hundred male NPS employees there, and I would guess that she had more of an impact on Yosemite than some of the superintendents in the sense of conceptual abilities, in the sense of purpose, and in the sense of place, and in the sense of values systems. They had a point of view that was reflected in their operation of a business, too, but if you look at her early contributions to the money for fishery research, for a variety of things in Yosemite. In fact, she was seeding things to get the government to get the hell on with things, so when you really get back to it – The other person, as far as anybody that you're talking about in Yellowstone, you just want to talk to Isabelle Haynes in Bozeman and she'll tell you more about Yellowstone than the whole cast of characters that's here now. She just is simply a wealth of information. I think I mentioned to you the other day Mardy Murie, who lives down in Moose. Mardy has tremendous recollection for any of the things that happened in the evolution of the Grand Teton and of Mt. McKinley. I would guess she has more background than probably anybody else. I recognize you always have to build a box and stay inside of it; otherwise you just have straw all over the mountain—

Dorothy Huyck: Exactly.

John Townsley: —and yet the implication, and it may be that I'm not – I hope you take this in the way it's meant – there might be some reference in a story that there were other groups of women who made extraordinary contributions to the National Park System, both in and out, and then this is sort of limited to these for certain reasons—

Dorothy Huyck: Exactly.

John Townsley: —because then you go on beyond the women that were involved with some of the concessioners, like Isabelle and Mrs. Tresidder and there are some other great names in that. Then you go to some of the people who were leaders in fights to establish parks, and there you have another set of people – females that had an extraordinary role.

Dorothy Huyck: Absolutely. There's no question about that.

John Townsley: I wasn't trying to get out of of the realm of propriety in saying that.

Dorothy Huyck: Oh, I agree entirely. Where were you in World War II?

John Townsley: I was young enough that I was working as a day laborer on a road crew in Yosemite when I was fifteen because they didn't have anybody else to work. Then I was in the Marine Corps for a couple of years but I never – I was in the United States so I didn't have any kind of a heavy military background in World War II.

Dorothy Huyck: So, when you came back from World War II were you going off to College at that stage?

John Townsley: No, I – my dad died—

Dorothy Huyck: Or were related to a park—

John Townsley: —and I basically worked in and out of the parks from about 1946 until about (pause) 1955, and intermittently I went to school and ended up with a degree in biology from Colorado A & M, which is now Colorado State. I worked (unintelligible). It was a very peculiar way of getting an education.

Dorothy Huyck: I asked you about that because World War II seems to be by far the most difficult period to research, even though the directors' reports show that five or six parks used women employees during that time. In fact, of course, the parks were not entirely closed down, as it's often perceived.

John Townsley: Not at all.

Dorothy Huyck: Locating the parks where women were employed and then trying to find out who was employed there is probably the biggest problem I have.

John Townsley: Again, you might find my mother useful as far as Yosemite. I don't recall seeing a great number of women in uniform per in Yosemite at that time. They were short. Almost all of the rangers, and I don't remember which – the naturalists went into the service quite early, just the large proportion. There were quite a few older men in Yosemite, and you might do yourself some good by looking at age classes. You know, in Yellowstone Lake we have no eight-year-old cutthroat trout, apparently at the moment, and biologically we understand that, but we don't really apply it socially. If you look at the National Park Service, you still have some of it, but if you

start out and look at different periods, what occurred, you not only got age groups, but you've got different kinds of backgrounds. In my dad's time most of the men probably had a little more limited educations, except for some of the military superintendents. Then you came to a time when, during the early part of the Depression, you had a large number of foresters who came in, and those men really lasted through World War II. The Yosemite ranger force in World War II still had quite a few men who would have had to be in their 50's, and they retired generally through the period '46 to about '53, so there was quite a lot of opening. Then you literally got an age class of World War II veterans in 1946 through 1950 who are now coming to the close of their careers, pretty much in my age group. For instance, they had a naval hospital at the Ahwahnee (Hotel) in Yosemite, and my mother worked there for the Navy and the Red Cross both. She could tell you some of that. There've always been a lot of women involved in the Post Offices in the parks, and some in the sense that they were postmistresses, you know, that could be considered professionals. I don't recall specifically in the sense of seasonal rangers or naturalists or particularly people working on entrance stations, that sort of thing, that's now common. Still, most of that was, as I recall at Yosemite, most of those were men.

Dorothy Huyck: Interestingly in this park, in Yellowstone, there is a woman who is still alive, but elderly who began working on a gate here in 1921, and her husband was a ranger. We still wonder sometimes whether women should be put on gating, but it happened here in 1921. That was Irene Wisdom whose husband was Tex Wisdom, a ranger in this park.

John Townsley: Where is she living now?

Dorothy Huyck: In Cody.

John Townsley: You probably learn one park well if you come out of a background like mine, and then no matter where you are or what the level of work you're doing, you never learn another one that same way. The people-name relationships for me, in Yosemite – I have to think about some of them, but I can go back and put them together. My work in Yellowstone, even though I've been here three years, you don't go back and pick up those kinds of things except as they by circumstance come to you. Somebody will come into the park. You'll meet them or you get to talking, but you don't have the time or the energy or, I guess the inclination, unless you're really geared that way, to really go back and search out the past. I think the things that you're doing, and some of the other books, the things that Bill Everhardt is doing, are really important in the sense that we're quickly losing all that.

Dorothy Huyck: Exactly. You get it now or you don't get it at all.

John Townsley: You get it now or you're not going to get it. I think one of the – oh, I wouldn't call it a tragedy or frailty, but I think one of the real – (pause) I think one of the sad things about most people working in the Service today is that most of them really don't give a damn about people prior to them. At Rainer when I went there as superintendent – and that's a fairly strong statement and I'm sure it could be challenged – but I've had people come in here to the office who worked for the Service twenty years ago, and I've said to somebody, "Why don't you spend a little time with him?" Well, the time goes quickly and it's very little. What I guess is in my mind, they gave a lot to it, and they come back and look in the window, and we're so busy with the mundane that we really don't have time maybe to be nothing more than a good listener.

Dorothy Huyck: But in fact, they're part of your continuity.

John Townsley: They're a part of your culture, they're part of the continuity, they're part of your past, they're part of why or where you are, they're part of your attitudes, they're part of everything you do. I started to mention at Rainier – We began a seasonal annual picnic, and we invited all the retirees who had been at Rainier, and by the second year what was obvious was we had two picnics going. We had the people who were there and the retirees. And then we broadened that to say that anybody that had worked for the Service who wanted to come, could, and that really got to be the intriguing part of that picnic, not the people who were there existing. You found that a few of these people would migrate over and be interested, but it was always surprising to me, and then again, I can't name the first naturalist at Rainier – it'll come in a little bit, but he came two years. One or two of the permanent naturalists and seasonal naturalists were really interested in meeting him and talking to him, and Frank Brockman was the guy who put most of the Rainier stuff together, and the same way. But the majority of them had their own thing going, and I don't say that critically. I just say it in the sense that I guess that's the nature of the human experience.

Dorothy Huyck: It's a fact.

John Townsley: But you're much poorer for not having those reference points and have the opportunity to be with people who've done something in the past. It seems to me that it's your enrichment and your pleasure and your interests – you're the gainer rather than them and (unintelligible) Time's tough to come by.

Dorothy Huyck: Indeed. (laughter) You're into a situation now in the present era when you do have women taking on new responsibilities – additional responsibilities

within the Park Service and within this particular park. Some of them seem to be relatively competent. Is that a reasonable statement?

John Townsley: I think some of them are extraordinarily competent. (pause) You're asking a leading question, and I'll let you lead it, and then I'll go further than you anticipate, or want. I would, at this point, say this becomes personal, emotional, visceral, all those things, rather than maybe totally objective because I don't think these are all issues that are particularly objective. I think during the time I was superintendent you would have found more women doing more things in a seasonal sense than in almost any other western park, yet I found myself answering to one of the most intense discrimination complaints that we've ever had, involving woman—

Dorothy Huyck: In what park this was?

John Townsley: Mt. Rainier. And the reason I was involved literally was that we had gone far enough into that era of providing opportunity – I don't mean in that sense, giving, but breaking down some barriers. We were doing some things or allowing some things to happen that still weren't happening every place, that then, in some instances, you found yourself perhaps not only with a woman who wanted to do the work or who wanted the experience but also had women's agendas generally in their minds, and were pursuing those. I think that's kind of an interesting facet of it, and I don't know how most women would react to my saying that, but I didn't see Rainier at that time is a place really for the women's liberation movement. I saw it as a place where the 1aw and the regulation and good morality and just good judgment, in the sense of business being healthier; I said let's try to get on with creating a climate of some equity for people to do work, and within the work sphere I was always very comfortable what we got really good work. From my personal view in this one case, and I wouldn’t go into it without six or eight hours – (laughter) was that that the agenda. The agenda was a whole lot of other things, and I just had a sense that I got sucked in. My reaction to that would simply be that you could either back off and become very conservative so it didn't happen to you again, or you just say, you know, if you've gotten of anything and eight of it is working well, you're going to have some negative experiences and you're going to have some super ones, and you don't let either end dissuade you from the middle. Yellowstone, when I came, had quite a number of seasonal naturalists, and I think Al Mebane in the Interpretative Division had gone further, perhaps, than some of the other divisions, and I think that that probably is logical. There were a number of seasonal women working as park rangers. There were no permanent females working as park rangers. I think always, particularly with the tape recorder, where if you're open you know there's an inherent risk in it. The

safe way is to say nothing, but we did end up with a vacancy of a sub-district ranger position down at Grant Village. I talked a little bit about the possibility of a woman for it and mentioned a name or two of some women that I thought were pretty capable that I'd been working with that at that point were at a grade and time in grade where I felt they would have been logical candidates. I didn't sense a very warm response to that, so I said, “When you get ready to fill that job with a woman, fine, but until then you're not going to fill it either with a permanent man or subject to furlough man or a seasonal man.” I'm saying this in this sense, that officially and unofficially, I don't think that there is an equation between the term EEO and affirmative action. I think that it would be quite easy for me as a manager in the last ten years to have done nothing at all and been in total compliance with everything that speaks to EEO. I think that when you take an affirmative action, by the whole nature of it, you're leaving complete equity behind some place, because an affirmative action normally does not mean that you're selecting or training or doing something with a group who already have equity, and if you had, you wouldn't have either one of those things to begin with. What in effect you're doing is playing “catch up,” and you're trying to bring people into a labor force that have not had the opportunity to be there. By the very nature of it, it's hard, I think, generally if you want to be conservative in your definition, to say that they're going to have equal backgrounds and have had equal experiences with the people who have been in when they've been on the out. I just don't get away from that point. By law, and lawyers, and regulations and stuff, I guess nobody can say that, but I think until you say it openly as well as to yourself, it's a hypocritical piece. So, we did look for a woman to come to that job, and the woman who is now in it, (Mary Jane McDowell) who you talked to, has done a really splendid job in it. The thing that I'm comfortable about – and a man wants to take me to court over that, I'll go to the court with him. I don’t give a damn – is that at this point she now has had an experience that was blocked to women generally, and she can compete with equity with men from this point forward. I would be very reluctant to see her get any special consideration past this point. Now, I don't think she was asking for anything special for that job. She had broken a barrier and was in the place and was doing very good work, and I think she was well qualified to come at that time, but I think that if you had gotten a cept eificate (unintelligible) of eligible, that you’d have had a hard time making a case that she was as qualified as somebody that had had those same experiences five times as long. So, to me that's an affirmative action and it's an appropriate action, and it’s in the spirit of the Constitution and the law and all of those things. But it is not without repercussion and it’s not without a lot of ill will. Frankly, I'm tired of hearing men say we want equity, when

in fact what they're saying is we want to keep the status quo. So that's where that stands. We didn't have a permanent woman naturalist and Allen, the regional director, and I, and some others felt very comfortable about making the opportunity available if she wanted it, to Margaret Short. Now I think Margaret has, in that job, has had some real learning to do, and I think she's going through the same process that all of us go through in jobs, and that is, you're not as proficient when you start, and neither was Janie McDowell and neither was I, neither was Dale Nuss, neither was anybody else. But I think she's doing a good learning job, and I think the important thing is to get women with good inherent ability into jobs and allow them the opportunity to move along, if you will, perhaps faster than other people who've had that opportunity for a long time. At some point, then, you'll have an opportunity with equity to choose a chief ranger at Yellowstone – it may be a man or it may be a woman, it maybe black or green or Catholic or this or that or whatever the hell it is; and until you get women in jobs where in fact the real power lies, you're not going to have an opportunity, really, to have a (unintelligible) work situation. I think there are other situations where I would have some reservation that total equity without any definition is necessarily in the public good of running something. I think that there is some work that a very strong female could do as well as the average man. I think we've defined much heavy work in a way that would preclude most females from it, but if you go back and look at actual performance, I think you'll see a lot of jobs where the men haven't been doing all that heavy work either. So by definition, I think you can count anybody out, but I think if you go back and honestly look at it, there's much less of the total work that really was done with all of this – whatever these qualities, men were supposed to have, but there are somethings – I think if you're out here on the road at night and you've got three or four guys in a car, and you've got troubles—

[END TAPE 1, SIDE A]

[START OF TAPE 1, SIDE B]

John Townsley: —This is in Washington, D.C., and I'll show you females that would make you just as concerned about not complying with what they told you as most male police officers, so this, to me, is not a man or a woman issue, but it is to say that if you're saying that everybody can do everything, probably in some issues you're going to take some losses. I've heard a lot of men say that if you put a woman on a gate at night, she's subject to being raped as well as being robbed. I think she makes that decision when she signs on, and I don't think you don't put her on the gate at night if she signed on. I think you in effect say you know you're going to have a person working that gate and there's money there and there are these

things, and that's a personal choice of the applicant, so those, for me, are not issues. Now from both men and women I would be criticized for having said that – some women and some men, but nonetheless, I would see it that way; so if I have a problem, it wouldn't be with a woman of small stature or emotional background or training background. It would be that there are both men and women who I would have problems with in certain kinds of work, and I think our society says that that's not appropriate for me to have those concerns, so you have some other pieces in there. Where that would really come down to me would be that if I were on a rescue effort on a cliff, I would make choice whether I would climb with you or a man or somebody else, and the fact that equity said that you may be qualified wouldn't mean a damned thing to me. It would be my personal decision whether I was willing to trust your judgment and your physical strength and your capabilities and your emotional fortitude and your stability. I would feel that way about getting in the helicopter with the helicopter pilot. I couldn't care less whether it was a male or a female. We have some very strong climbers in here who are women, and I would much prefer to be in a tricky place with them than with somebody else. This woman I mentioned at Mt. Rainier with the discrimination business, I wouldn't have cared to be in any kind of a police or law enforcement or rescue or tenuous situation with her under any circumstances; and there are men the same way; so maybe I'm beating around the bush a little bit, but I sometimes think that by being in compliance, we in fact are asking other people to subject themselves to some situations that I don't know that you have that right to ask, too, so there are two sides to that street.

Dorothy Huyck: What is the source of your sense of defining equity? In other words, not every superintendent has the sense of equity that you are speaking of. I'm thinking of a superintendent who requires his female naturalist to vacuum the offices. You have a different sense of what a female naturalist is expected to do, apparently because you're concerned with equity. Probably your male naturalists don't vacuum, and your female naturalists don't either. What's the source of your sense of equity?

John Townsley: I think probably three things. One, my mother used to go to an interracial church in San Francisco. We had a minister by the name of Howard?, and he later became the – I don't whether you call it the rector or whatever – of Boston University at a time when Boston was pretty conservative, and I think he would be known in that world as one of the extraordinary religious leaders of his time. I recall being at dinner one time when he was talking about his daughter going to Vassar. It has always been a very vivid recollection because his comment was that it made her sick to her stomach to be in the shower with white women. We make the assumption that

white is fine, black is the thing that's different, but for her white was nauseating.

Dorothy Huyck: What was her racial background?

John Townsley: Well, she was black—

Dorothy Huyck: I see.

John Townsley: —and I can see that. We're really kind of a washed out cast of characters, when you stop to think about it. And so, from that, when we integrated the swimming pools in Washington, D.C. – I was working in the Headquarters office – I began taking my boys down to East Potomac Park on Saturdays to go swimming, and those swimming pools were really full of black kids because they had never been able to go swimming. So, you didn't swim, you just stood there body to body, and that was the first time that I'd ever been a minority. I never talked to the kids about it, and they never questioned it. They wanted to go swimming, but it really bothered me to be literally compacted with hundreds of black guys. I don't mean in a they're wrong-I'm-right, good-bad sense, but it was just a very strange feeling to be a minority. Then when I went to the superintendency in he New York City group, I found myself again involved in an extraordinary series of discrimination complaints that finally went not only against me or about me, but to the regional director, and the director, and the Secretary of the Interior, and the President. It involved some Jewish historians and later many black people who were there, but—

Dorothy Huyck: Park Service personnel?

John Townsley: Yes. It was very, very clear that for many, many years, particularly the black people who worked at the Statue of Liberty – and that's kind of an irony when you think of the basis of that – many had had no opportunity. Literally no opportunity. I think sometimes you have to go through some very personal experiences in which maybe you don't have anything to do with the set of events, but you find yourself caught up in them, and you don't know whether you're right or you're wrong, or whether – I don't think the persons themselves are seldom able to judge. I would have done some things differently when I first went there if I'd known what was going to have occurred, so I'm not suggesting that I was right and they were wrong, but I think that there was a long history that spoke to the issues that uncorked the bottle. You can't put the cork back in and you don't want to. So that doesn't speak to women, but I guess it speaks to where I would be in the sense of saying that a workplace should be a place for all human beings that can do it ought to be able to participate in it, be a part of it. I think more recently a man by the name of Methane – you may know him in the Washington, D.C. area, who is a doctor at Liverpool – in

his youth – I don't know for a week or how long, but he takes most of this EEO business and puts it into terms that I find easy to understand and those are these, generally: That you've got the ins and you've got the outs; you've got the haves and you've got the have nots – these aren't his words – and basically it boils down to power. And his distinc- is that 98 per cent or 95 per cent of the white males are in the same condition that minorities and females are in, that they don't have any power. All he's really saying is if you people want a piece of the action, you've got to get power, and you'd better look at the 5 per cent of the white males who've got it and see how they got it, and see how they keep it, and see how they nurture it. That's where the action is instead of always talking about the philosophy and all this stuff. I agree with that. So, I think that one of the things you do then is to try to provide opportunity for talented, quality people to participate. When they do, then they begin to have the opportunity to acquire power, and power in the sense I'm using it is a very constructive thing. You've got to have power to negotiate. You've got to have power to make things happen, and without it, you're never going to develop the attributes that make things occur. What we're talking about in National Park work is a social instrument. The body of parks are an instrument of our society. They're evolving. It's a living thing. I think we'll be a stronger institution when you have the input of a variety of people, and I think we're beginning to see that. I was pleased to see Glen Penner from the National Capital Parks become a training officer in the Service. It's true she doesn't know a hell of a lot about mountain climbing in Yellowstone, but I think there are people who can help her understand that in the sense of her responsibilities, and I think will know a lot of things about a lot more things shorter than some of the training officers we've had. Yet at a point where composition is reasonable, then I don't think – I think when consciously – I think when you could say that you make a decision about who you hire or who you promote or who you train or who gets this or who gets that, when that is totally subconscious, then you're not going to have to worry about EEO or affirmative action, all that stuff, but there's going to have to be a time when it is conscious. If it's conscious, there's going to be inequity some place, and if you're going to demand equity, all you're saying is, "I like it the way it is." That's kind of where I'm at. I'm not saying I do well, and I'm not saying I don't make errors, but I think just consciously you try to do right, and you hope that some things happen to work out well.

Dorothy Huyck: I've been sitting here asking you a variety of questions about women and about your own attitude on equity. Is there some area on this topic that I haven't asked anything about that you'd like to comment on that we should have commented on?

John Townsley: Maybe just one thing. I think that one of the values of your book would be that if there is no opportunity, you're not going to see people aspire to it, and I think a book like yours can be helpful to young women in the sense that there can be career opportunities to them. I think this is particularly true. You see very few black people in Yellowstone. If I were to talk to my colleagues in the National Capital – many of them very well educated, very astute, very thoughtful people, they'd say, "Well, the reason you don't is that they're not comfortable there." A lot of white people would give you a different answer. The fact is that it isn't that they don't like rural America. Well, you know, they came from rural America. It isn't that they don't like the food here, all that stuff that we keep using, and I think that it's important that a black parent bring a black youngster to Yellowstone and a black youngster see a black ranger or a black naturalist, and then it becomes a natural thing that he may aspire to – to do. I think that's one of the things that's made it very difficult for us to acquire minority people. It's not that they don't want to come but that it's not the reference point to it, and I think Tony Dean – Tony's wife could share some things with you that would speak to the same issue that the women feel about. I think that there's some real universals in that, so you could use the black, or the woman, or perhaps a person with a physical defect. You know, I'm a fairly large person and sometimes that's to your advantage. I suspect it's more to my disadvantage rather than to my advantage. I think that we should talk about this from a nation – about sizes of people: people that are thin versus people that are fat. You know, there's all kinds of things that we're just beginning to sift around and wonder about, so I think it's really important that things like you're doing get into the marketplace so that all people sense that there is an opportunity. That's a long haul; you're talking about generations when you begin to speak to it that way. Then I think there's another important thing too, and that is that a woman who's really going to help that occur will take some of the responsibility other than to herself or a minority person. Generally, that's a pretty tough one because they've already had the tough time getting in or making it, and then you say, "Now, you've got to do something for your race or for your sex. I'd go back again and say that the lady you interviewed down at Grant (Mary Jane McDowell) is the epitome of the person who has done a great deal to help the next woman come to Yellowstone. You'll find a number of the male rangers here say, "You know, she's a good professional ranger." On the other hand, you've got women – and I say this with some criticism and subjectively – maybe I'm wrong – are really hung up on a lot of male-female stuff, and that's always got to be in the forefront of it. They're not helping other women make it, so I think there's a very delicate balance in the knowing person about how they deal with that issue because it isn't all there, it isn't all together, it hasn't all happened. You're trying to change

attitudes and a lot of people and a lot of different reference points. I have some (unintelligible) fancies about some things of women here in Yellowstone, and I keep expressing them, and I'm sure that what I do has rubbed most people the wrong way. I think this long, stringy damn hair that the women have hanging down over uniforms is bad news. It isn't businesslike, it isn't a lot of things. Now, if they demand that's one of their ways that they do things and they want to keep it that way, then, in my judgment, for some people they're making it a little tougher for the whole group to move. You find a lot of males here that say, "John, you're wrong as hell. We like it that way." And you say, "Don't males exhibit male characteristics in their work," and that's probably true, but I think some of the more successful ones aren't around lifting weights or making muscles work or whatever the male things might be. I think an astute woman would say to herself, "One of the things that I can do that in effect really speak to doing a good professional job in a professional way where people cease to consider me as a woman or a man or a black or a white…" I think a lot of women haven't learned that lesson yet. I think a lot of men haven't learned lessons too, including myself. I don't think by making the point that they're really helping, and they do have to get – literally, they have to get other people interested in that enterprise because the law and the regulation won't do it by themselves. Those are prejudices coming out.

Dorothy Huyck: Thank you so very much.

[END TAPE 1, SIDE B]

[END OF INTERVIEW]

HUYCK NOTE: Townsley refers to Carol Brockman and later to Frank Brockman. Carl Frank Brockman are one and the same. Suggest that we use Frank Brockman throughout to avoid confusion. (Mr. Brockman is best known as "Frank").